

What is claimed is:

1. A method of controlling communications between at least one first contracting party and potential second contracting parties on the basis of third party information from an agent, the third party information including at least the identity of the first contracting party and a description of contractual subject matter, comprising the steps of:
 - (a) receiving and storing third party information;
 - (b) providing access to the contractual subject matter of the third party information for queries by second contracting parties;
 - (c) receiving bids from second contracting parties for access to the identity of the first contracting party, each bid including at least a statement of a closing fee offered by the second contracting party for closing a contract with the first contracting party; receiving a bid fee for each bid from each second contracting party making a bid; and storing the bids and bid fees, and
 - (d) determining the bids with the N highest statements of closing fees at a predetermined time with $N \geq 1$; transmitting the identity of the first contracting party to the N second contracting parties making the N bids; and transmitting at least a portion of all bid fees to the agent.
2. The method of claim 1, including the further steps of:
 - (e) receiving evaluation data relative to the third party information within a predetermined interval of time, and
 - (f1) if an evaluation data indicates that a contract has been closed between the first contracting party and one of the second contracting parties, receiving the closing fee included in the bid of the particular second contracting party and transmitting at least a

share thereof to the agent, or

- f2) if no evaluation data indicates closing of a contract, but evaluation data is received from a majority of the second contracting parties which have made the N bids, recovering the bid fees from the agent and returning them to the second contracting parties.

5

3. The method of claim 1, wherein only bids comprising the M highest statements of bid fees are admitted for determining the N bids, wherein $M \geq N$.

10 4. The method of claim 1, wherein only bids the bid fee of which exceeds a predetermined threshold value are considered for determining the N bids.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein in respect of each agent statistical data is kept and updated about one of its third party information and evaluation data
15 relating to all its third party information.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein at least one of the share of the bid fees and the share of the closing fee is determined on the basis of the statistical data.

20 7. The method of claim 1, wherein for every second contracting party submitting a bid there is maintained and updated statistical data regarding at least one of its bids and evaluation data.

8. The method of claim 7, wherein the bid fee is set on the basis of the
25 statistical data and is accepted upon placement of a bid by the second contracting party.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein the second contracting parties are classified and the bid fee of a party is determined by the classification of that

18. The method of claim 17, wherein the reception of bids from a predetermined second contracting party is only granted in dependence of the classification of the predetermined second contracting party.

5 19. A computer system for controlling communications between at least one first contracting party and potential second contracting parties on the basis of third party information from an agent, the third party information including at least the identity of the at least one first contracting party and a description of the contractual subject matter, comprising:

10 a first data base provided with an input interface for the agent by which third party information is received, the first data base being provided with a private section and a public section, at least the identity of the first contracting party being stored in the private section and the description of the contractual subject matter being stored in the public section, and further with a queries
15 interface by which potential second contracting parties may query the public section;

an accounts maintenance device for keeping credit accounts for each agent inputting third party information;

a second data base including an input interface by which second
20 contracting parties may input bids for being granted access to the private section of the first data base regarding specific third party information, each bid including at least a statement of a closing fee offered by that second contracting party to close a contract with the first contracting party, and each bid having associated therewith a predetermined bid fee;

25 an accounts maintenance device for keeping credit accounts for every second contracting party submitting a bid;

a collective storage for collecting bid fees, each submission of a bid into the second data base causing the transfer of the associated bid fee from the credit account of the submitting second contracting party to the collective

38. A computer program product embodied on a machine readable data carrier for controlling communications between at least one first contracting party and potential second contracting parties on the basis of third party information from an agent, the third party information including at least the identity of the first contracting party and a description of contractual subject matter, comprising:

5 a first code segment for receiving and storing third party information;

a second code segment for providing access to the contractual subject matter of the third party information for queries by second contracting parties;

a third code segment for receiving bids from second contracting parties for

10 access to the identity of the first contracting party, each bid including at least a statement of a closing fee offered by the second contracting party for closing a contract with the first contracting party; for receiving a bid fee for each bid from each second contracting party making a bid; and for storing the bids and bid fees; and

15 a fourth code segment for determining the bids with the N highest statements of closing fees at a predetermined time with $N \geq 1$; for transmitting the identity of the first contracting party to the N second contracting parties making the N bids; and for transmitting at least a portion of all bid fees to the agent.

20

25